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TREATISE

1477-66-32

ON

RAZORS;

In which the Weight, Shape, and Temper of a Razor, the Means of Keeping it in Order, and the Manner of Using it, are particularly considered;

AND

In which it is intended to convey a knowledge of all that is necessary on this subject.

By BENJAMIN KINGSBURY.

L O N D O N:

Sold at the Shops, No. 85, PICCADILLY, opposite the GREEN-PARK, and No. 3, MITRE-COURT, FLEET-STREET; and by all BOOKSELLERS.

1797.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

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ADVERTISE



I am aware that many of those persons who may hear of this pamphlet, and, especially, of those who know the general employments of my life, will indulge a smile at the idea of the subject on which I have now chosen to write. To the latter I may plead it's connection with my present profession. The former I could wish to reflect on the number of contradictory opinions which they have heard on this subject; and from many of which they may find that they themselves are not free. If they are not induced by this reflection to think more favourably of my subject, I wish them to consider the many unpleasant feelings they have experienced, the many bitter complaints they have uttered, in consequence of bad razors, bad strops, or something else on which the blame might conveniently be thrown; and to recollect the frequency with which such occasions of complaint recur.—In the state of mind which such considerations produce, they will, I doubt not, acknowledge the importance of the subject of which I treat.

November 1st.

ADVERTISEMENT

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November 18



A
TREATISE
ON
RAZORS.

SECT. I.

*Of the Weight, Shape, and Goodness of
Razors.*

THERE are but four circumstances, of any consequence, to be attended to by the person who wishes to purchase a good razor; and these are, it's weight, it's shape, the excellence of the material of which it is made, and the state of it's edge at the time of purchase.

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With respect to the *weight* of razors opinions are various, both among the public in general, and those who are engaged in the manufacture or sale of them; but most of whom have, perhaps, not been inclined to examine the subject with much attention, or able to investigate it with much accuracy.

Those, who have maintained the superiority of large and heavy razors to small and light ones, have, evidently, argued on the supposition that the beard may more easily be removed by the application of an instrument of great weight than by that of one whose weight is less considerable; and this opinion they seem to have embraced without reflecting that the pressure of the instrument depends less on itself than on the hand that holds it, and without knowing, or without considering, in what manner the edge of a razor is formed, and on what principle it acts. Without dwelling on the first of these particulars, which is of itself sufficient to overturn the unstable hypothesis of the superior utility of heavy razors, I proceed to explain, according to the best of my judgment, the two latter circumstances; to illustrate the unimportance of any great weight of metal to the excellence of a razor by considering the nature of its edge, and the mode of its operation.

It is a rule in mechanics to adapt the weight of a cutting instrument to the degree of resistance it will meet with. Thus,
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if a tough stick, or log of wood in which regularity is not wanted, is to be divided, the weight of the instrument must be very considerable, and this weight must be increased by the celerity of it's motion. In other cases, (for instance, where the stick is not tough) a great weight of metal is unnecessary, and a common cutting knife will be sufficient for the purpose; force, in such cases, supplying the place of weight. But, with respect to all those substances which are not capable of making any great degree of resistance, it is not weight or force, but, principally, keenness of edge, that is required to separate them. And it is evident that the beard is of this description.

But the very nature of every fine edged instrument, and the manner of it's operation, as well as the slightness of those substances to which it is invariably applied, demonstrate the inutility of it's possessing much weight. The edge of a razor, a pen-knife, and every other very keen instrument, consists of a great number of minute points, commonly called teeth, which, if the instrument is in good condition, follow each other through it's whole extent with great order and closeness, and constitute by their unbroken regularity it's excessive keenness. The edge of such an instrument acts upon the beard, the skin, or any thing else, not so much by the direct application of weight or force, as by being drawn, even slightly, along it; because, by this operation, the
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fine teeth of which it consists pass, in quick succession, in the same direction and over the same part of the substance. My readers will be convinced of this, if they will make the following experiment on their glove or their hand, as they like best. Let them hold the razor either perpendicularly or obliquely, and press upon it with considerable force, in a direct line from right to left, and they will have no great reason to fear the consequences. But let them move it from that direction, let them draw it towards them, or push it from them, in the smallest degree, in the gentlest manner, and it will instantly make an incision. When they have made this experiment, they will be convinced of the truth of what I have asserted; namely, that, in the operation of shaving, very little weight, and even very little force, are necessary.

If, however, they still have doubts, if they are not yet persuaded that the weight of the razor is immaterial, and that the condition of its edge is alone to be regarded, let them examine the teeth and mode of operation of a saw, which works its way, not by its own weight, nor yet, in any degree, by the force of the hand which guides it, but by the quick succession of points arranged at due and regular distance, and cutting in the same line of direction. Indeed, a common saw is better calculated to convey some idea of the edge of a razor, and its mode of operation,

ration, to a superficial observer, than, perhaps, any instrument whatever. It's teeth are distinct, even to the naked eye; they are formed in a similar manner, though (for a reason to be hereafter mentioned) in a different direction; and the mode of their operation, allowing for the difference of the object, is the same.

After all, I think it should be acknowledged that the weight of the razor is of little or no importance, except when prejudice in favour of either fashion leads into either extreme; and, perhaps, the best general direction that can be given upon this subject is, that every person should chuse his razors of such a weight as he thinks himself most expert in managing: for if, in consequence of the lightness of the instrument, the operation of shaving may be performed, in some small degree, with greater facility and nicety, it must, on the other hand, be admitted that many persons, from the influence of habit, can grasp a larger instrument with greater ease and pleasure than a smaller one.

I have bestowed a greater portion of time, and a greater diffuseness of argument, on this dull question than it's own importance may seem to require; but I know full well the extent of common prejudice on this subject, and have too often met with persons, of my profession and otherwise, who retail the opinions they have heard without either deep enquiry or even transient thought, but with
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a very high degree of confidence and obstinacy.

With respect to the *shape* of a razor, the next circumstance to be attended to in its choice, I have but little to observe that is worth the trouble either of writing or of reading. The universal rule should be to chuse those whose edges are strait, and, on that account, likely to take off a considerable part of the beard at one stroke; a form so simple in itself, and productive of so much convenience when either the hone or the razor-strop is used, that I am surprised to find that a manufacturer of skill and judgment can recommend to his customers razors of a description exactly contrary.

The next particular to be regarded in the choice of a razor is the excellence of its substance; by which I mean its temper, or highest degree of solidity, and its consequent capability of receiving, after a series of years, a firm and fine edge. This is, undoubtedly, the circumstance of most importance, and to which the purchaser should most particularly attend; and I feel happy in the reflection that I can bring forwards to the notice of the public a mode of judging of the goodness of a razor which, though not aspiring to the praise of infallibility, is of more importance than any other, and is, perhaps, the boundary which separates the probable conclusions of a person to whom a razor is offered from the almost certain knowledge

ledge of the artist who was employed in tempering it. Some advice, however, which may previously be offered to my readers, as directly applicable to this subject, is to chuse such razors as seem to be least porous, and most free from flaws of any kind. The former particular is of importance, because in proportion to the solidity of the razor, and the union of it's particles, will be the strength and durability of its edge.* This is invariably and necessarily the case; and on this depends, principally, the excellence of the instru-

* I am desirous of not being misunderstood. It is of the **SOLIDITY** of the steel, of the closeness of it's particles, and not of it's **HARDNESS**, that I am speaking. In the process of tempering steel, these circumstances are considerably at variance. A bar of steel, when overheated, loses its **SOLIDITY**, and, though more brittle, acquires, in the proper sense of the word, an additional degree of **HARDNESS**. The great object, then, in this ingenious process is to give to the steel all possible solidity. Previous to being tempered, it is in want of this quality; and, if the degree of heat which it experiences is too great, or (which is the same thing in this case) is too long continued, it loses what, at a certain point, it had gained.

My readers will, therefore, perceive that a razor will be too porous both when not heated sufficiently, and when heated too much; and that the medium between these two extremes is the exact point which determines the close union of it's particles, and, of course, it's temper.

The porosity of a bad razor will be easily discovered by those who attentively examine a good one. In a well tempered razor an extreme closeness of particles may be observed; in one that is not so, a considerable degree of disunion and separation of the parts never fails to take place. This circumstance connects itself (and I believe universally) with one of more consequence; because it affords a more striking proof of a razor's quality in this respect.

I will only add here that I am surprised to find that to this important particular the attention of the public has never yet been directed.

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ment. As a branch, however, of this subject, the latter circumstance must be noticed ; for a flaw in a razor, though it is but a want of compactness in it's parts, is sometimes by much the most detrimental. A razor, though it's pores be large,† may admit of an edge sufficiently firm and durable for a beard of no considerable strength ; but when a flaw, however small, forms, either in the first instance or by subsequent use, a part of it's edge, it will frustrate all the attempts of the most skilful operator to communicate to that part any great degree of smoothness, or even to deprive it of it's lacerating power.

It must, however, be acknowledged that, in many parts of a razor, a flaw is immaterial ; and that it is worth regarding only when it actually forms a part of the edge, or will, probably, become one hereafter. To insure safety from the first, a good glass is necessary ; with respect to the latter, the surface of a razor does not always afford the means of forming a sure judgment ; and, therefore, whether the flaw appears large or small, it is, generally, desirable to avoid it.

† This is applicable only to those razors which are porous in consequence of not having been heated sufficiently. When the largeness of the pores arises from the opposite cause, the razor is so far from admitting of an edge that is durable that it will not RECEIVE (I believe, without exception) a proper edge EVEN FOR ONE MOMENT. This circumstance (by no means generally known to those who ought to know it well, I mean the venders, if not the makers, of razors) deserves from the public much attention.

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I now proceed to point out what I have stated to be a more important, because a more striking, proof of the excellence of a razor's temper. In few words, it arises from that perfect change of colour in the body of a razor which the action of tempering it produces. When this process begins, the steel is of a whitish colour; as it continues, the colour changes; and, when the fusible parts become so far melted as to fill up all the interstices, a perfect and uniform blue diffuses itself as far as the fire was intended to operate. At this precise time, the steel is immersed in water, the action of fusion ceases, the temper of the future razor is determined, and the process terminates. I wish to obtain my reader's particular attention to this circumstance. The character of its proof is simple, and yet ingenious; easily understood, and yet demonstrative. I, therefore, proceed to remark, in confirmation of the inference from this statement, that, when the heat is continued too long, an exactly contrary effect is produced; the colour, instead of being blue, is a dead white, the softer parts of the steel are destroyed, the pores, instead of being filled up, become larger, and a good razor cannot be made from it. On one side, then, the doctrine I have advanced is well supported. On the other, the argument is yet more satisfactory; because almost every well tempered razor carries with it its own evidence. To-

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wards the heel (as it is called) of such a razor, the exact limit of the fire is, generally, more or less discernible; in one part, the pores are considerably larger than in the other, and, notwithstanding equal labour was bestowed upon them by the polisher, on one side, likewise, the colour remains as white as it was at first, and, on the other, is a perfect and uniform blue.—I have only to add to this statement my belief that the excellence of a razor's temper is in proportion to the deepness and universality of this colour.

It must be evident that the instruction, to be derived from this doctrine, for the choice of razors, though sufficient, in general, for distinguishing between a good razor and a bad one, will afford little or no assistance in determining the comparative value of two or more of the latter sort. To these cases, such a circumstance, of course, will not apply. Nor can it be expected that a person, unaccustomed to examine these articles, will be able so completely to avail himself of the information I have offered as the man whose powers of discrimination are strengthened by experience, and who, as a skilful artist, possesses, likewise, other means of forming his judgment. So that, if it be said that directions merely verbal, however well founded and important, are calculated to convey but a partial knowledge of a razor's intrinsic excellence, the truth of the observation must, without doubt,

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in some degree be admitted. It is impossible for the mere observer, however attentive and penetrating, to form, in general, so just an opinion of a razor's temper as the man who made it, or who is acquainted with the degree of care and skill bestowed upon it. Hence it is obvious that this deficiency of knowledge can be supplied only by the competency of the person who sells it; and the purchaser must exercise his judgment on this subject. He should be satisfied that the knowledge of the person with whom he deals is equal to the business he undertakes; and that, from his own experience, and his liberal recompence for the time and abilities of those who work for him, he can answer for the perfection of the razors which he recommends.—I fear that, of the number of those who deal in this article, few indeed are qualified to undertake this office; and, judging from the false opinions which so generally prevail among them, I imagine that, far from possessing the knowledge requisite for this purpose, the greater part of them are not even capable of communicating to a well wrought razor that exquisite degree of keenness which experience and skill have power to bestow.—But of this more hereafter.

The last circumstance to be attended to in the choice of a razor, is the condition of it's edge at the time of purchase. This circumstance, though not of much con-

sequence to the person who thoroughly understands the use of the hone and the razor-strop, is of considerable importance to the public in general. Here, too, it is highly desirable, though not so necessary as in the former case, that the vender should be a person upon whose knowledge of razors the purchaser may place dependence; for very many are the razors delivered to the public which, when sold, are almost utterly unfit for the purpose for which they are intended. So many are the accidents to which, from the nature of the instrument, it is exposed; so great is the carelessness or ignorance of those by whom it's goodness has been tried, and so general is the inability of the dealer to restore to it what it has lost, that, however excellent when it proceeded from the hands of the workman, it is often put into the hands of the purchaser with a wiry or unequal edge, and, perhaps, with several notches. These defects, we must suppose, are unobserved and unknown; but they are not, therefore, less real; and many of my readers, I apprehend, can testify to the truth of this statement. To guard them, as much as is possible, from the effects of this ignorance or inattention in the persons with whom they deal, I will, briefly, mention the manner in which the edge of a razor should be examined. The common custom is to try it's edge, in a few parts, or, perhaps, but in one, on the skin; and, after this experiment, the public

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lic are, generally, satisfied. This is a bad plan, because it easily, and indeed necessarily, admits of deception. The edge of a razor may be excellent in one part, and without any degree of keenness in another. If this plan, therefore, of trying the razor on the skin be adopted at all, it must be adopted completely. The uniform keenness of its edge must be ascertained by examining it, in the same manner, from one end to the other; and this must be done with very great attention and precision. But a piece of soft leather, stretched tightly, will answer this end much better.— To discover whether the edge of a razor is free from wire and from notches, I advise my readers to draw it * gently along their thumb-nail, observing whether it passes along in every part with equal ease and smoothness; or (which is more satisfactory, though less easy) to examine its whole extent with a magnifying glass.

* The razor must not be pressed upon the nail in any degree, as is often done injudiciously, by those who ought to know better. By this means, the keenness of its edge, and the nicety of the experiment, are alike diminished. Its own weight is sufficient for the purpose.



Of the Hone, and of Setting a Razor.

HAVING thus treated of the choice of razors, I proceed to give my readers some directions for the skilful management of them. And I adopt this order on the supposition that, either from neglect or want of the necessary knowledge, their razors may need all the improvement which united attention and skill have the power of communicating.

It has been asserted by some that the hone is not a necessary appendage of a razor, excepting when in the hands of the workman; and that the razor-strop alone is sufficient to keep a razor in order, without either setting or grinding. This opinion has proceeded from some of the most despicable of the razor-strop makers, who, without a knowledge of the subject, and, evidently, without having attended to it, have attracted the notice of the public by the unceasing repetition of their advertisements, and their impudent commendations of their own articles. From this censure I must particularly except MR. SAVIGNY, who, though he has delivered nearly the same opinion,* is most

* See the first edition of MR. SAVIGNY's pamphlet, page 29, line 11, and page 30, line 2; and the fourth edition, page 30, line 18.

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justly entitled to the rewarding patronage of the public, and the respectful notice of his brethren. A similar exercise of candour is, I doubt not, due to many others; and, were I as well acquainted with their merits, as I am with those of the gentleman before mentioned, I should pay them with equal pleasure the small tribute of my praise. But, with respect to the persons alluded to, who impose upon the public, as their own discoveries, compositions the effects of which have been known for years, and who, even by the shape of their razor-strops, contrive to betray their ignorance, I know of nothing to which they are entitled but pity, and of nothing which they deserve but contempt.

The opinion that, when a razor has been ground and set, the razor-strop alone is sufficient to preserve it afterwards in order, has not received, to my knowledge, any better support than the general declaration of the fine edge which a razor-strop is able to communicate. The truth of this opinion I do not hesitate to deny; and, agreeably to my uniform design of rendering every thing as intelligible to my readers as my abilities and knowledge of the subject will permit, I will state my reasons for it.

To those of my profession whose whole knowledge of the business consists in being able to spread the composition on their razor-strops, and to recommend themselves

selves to their customers by their skill in puffing, perhaps the best answer may be plain matter of fact. Let them, therefore, examine a razor in the state in which it proceeded from the hands of the workman, and before it's appearance has been altered by the application of their own razor-strops. In the slight examination necessary for my purpose, they will perceive that the slope of the razor from it's back is suddenly changed when it approaches almost close to the edge; and they, probably, know that this alteration of it's form is caused by the setting of the razor upon the hone. The fact itself they can distinguish, and with the cause I suppose them acquainted; but of the principle of that fact, of the cause of that cause, it will soon appear that they are ignorant.

But, to continue this appeal to sense, for the benefit of those whom interest forbids to be influenced by other evidence, I ask the maker (real or supposed) of razor-strops whose excellence is such as to render grinding and setting unnecessary, whether he can preserve, by his all-powerful strop, that particular form of a razor's edge which is notoriously the effect of setting, and which every razor-maker knows to be the best, or whether it's continued use will not entirely destroy this appearance, and produce an edge whose form is exactly contrary. Yes, the eye will determine the merits of this question; unless, indeed, it be arrogated that
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the whole body of cutlers are mistaken with respect to the form of the edge which they should give to their instruments, and unless it be conveniently contended that these wonder-working strops are designed to produce an improvement in their form, and not merely to restore the keenness they have lost.—Of this daring even the persons I speak of are incapable. An indistinct and mysterious, and not a precise and open, claim on the indulgent weakness of the public is most suitable to their purpose.

The edge which is given to a razor by setting is as fine as it is possible to give to it consistently with it's object. It is called a flat edge;—not because it is really flat, (for perfect flatness can never be the property of any instrument that unites keenness with durability) but because it is, in general, almost flat, and in order to distinguish it from that shaped edge which is communicated by stropping. In fact, the edge which is caused by a hone is always as flat as a proper attention to the degree of firmness required will permit; and though, of course, it must not be entirely flat, it is, nevertheless, *strait* from the fulcrum which supports it to the very extremity of it's parts. This cannot be truly said of the edge which is produced by stropping. When a razor has been stropped much, it's edge assumes a different appearance. Instead of being almost flat, it becomes, in a considerable

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degree, round *; and, in proportion as it assumes this form, it loses it's keenness. The fact itself is perceptible by the eye of any one; the inference from it is clear to the understanding of the most dull.

A little reflection on the object to be gained by stropping, and on the fitness of a razor-strop to secure the attainment of it, will satisfactorily account for this fact, and, at the same time, establish the necessity of it's existence. What, then, is the object which, by the use of the razor-strop we design to obtain? If it be said that this object is the production of the utmost keenness of which a razor is capable, and that the razor-strop alone is sufficient for this purpose †, I ask why, if this is the case, the hone is resorted to in the first instance; and, more particularly, why, by means of a hone, we produce an edge that is almost flat, when the strop which is to succeed it, and which, by supposition, supersedes it's use ever after, communicates an edge that is exactly the reverse. The fact is, that the proper use of the ra-

* It is what such razor-strop makers as I have before spoken of call A FINE ROUND EDGE; an absolute contradiction, and (as the acknowledged effect of their strops) an ample refutation of their own hypothesis.

† I wish to preserve my readers from mistake. The assertion that the razor-strop alone will not give to a razor all the keenness which it is capable of receiving, does not militate against the doctrine, which I afterwards lay down, that the use of the strop is to smooth, and, to a certain degree, to sharpen, the edge of a razor after setting. It is against the continued use of the strop, without ever recurring to the hone, that I am arguing.

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zor-strop is to smoothe the edge of a razor after setting, and when it becomes rough by the strength of the beard it engages with; and, by smoothing it, to add, in a certain degree, to it's keenness. I say that this is the proper use of a razor-strop, because I think I have already proved, not only that the flattest and thinnest edge must always be the keenest, but that razor-strops, instead of being calculated to produce this edge, do, in fact, produce, by continued use, what is called a round one. This must, indeed, be necessarily the case on account of the very nature of a razor-strop. Opposite in it's nature to a hone, the razor-strop is a soft and yielding substance; and must, therefore, produce an edge not only different in it's form from that which is caused by setting, but possessing, likewise, less keenness. As the razor is drawn along or across the strop, it's edge is almost encompassed by the softness of the leather and the composition, which, when free from pressure, return, of course, to their former situation, and naturally form a declivity down which the edge is continually passing. That this is the case, must be evident to a person of common reflection. If, however, it's truth be doubted, such doubt may be removed by drawing the razor along some substance which is yet more elastic; and by recollecting that, as a razor's edge is extremely fine, a small degree of declivity will produce the effect.

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Let it, however, be understood that this effect will, in some degree, vary with different razor-strops, according to the manner in which they are made. But this variation can produce no change in the position that the use of the most vaunted strop will not render setting unnecessary, and that the person who wishes that his razors should, at all times, be capable of cutting as keenly as they can be made to cut, consistently with a due regard to the degree of strength required, will, occasionally, have recourse to the assistance of the hone.

I now proceed to offer such brief instructions for the use of the hone as seem necessary to remove the errors and difficulties which prevail on this subject. To me, I acknowledge, it appears that these difficulties are imaginary; and that to set a razor well is, at least, as easy as to strop it well. In this case, as in many others, the difficulty arises from supposing there is difficulty; and, as on subjects which prejudice has darkened, we have only to diffuse the light of reason to make the whole system of error vanish, so, when difficulties are the offspring of mere imagination, a little rational explanation may, at once, make the matter simple in theory, and easy in practice.

The first thing that should be done to the hone is to wipe it clean; and the second is to spread a few drops of pure oil upon it, or upon that part of it which

is to be used. Of these two most difficult operations the object is to prevent any particles of dirt, or other substance, from remaining on the hone, and impeding it's full and equal effect. When the operator has proceeded thus far, let him place his thumb and fore finger, sideways, on that part of the heel of the razor at which the handle terminates, so as to have firm hold both of the razor and it's handle. Let him then lay one side of the razor flat across the hone, and so that the shoulder of the razor (which adjoins the heel) may touch the nearest part of it. Having gained this position, he may begin to draw the razor towards him, in a manner somewhat circular, and with a moderate degree of pressure, till he arrives at the very point of it. When this has been done a few times, the razor should be turned, and the same operation take place on the other side of it. In this manner he may proceed till the hone has produced the desired effect. This effect will be evident from the wiry appearance which the edge of the razor assumes when sufficiently honed; and, till this wire is produced from one end of the razor to the other, the operation is not complete. When, from the appearance of the wire, he is convinced that the edge is worn to a sufficient degree of thinness, let him draw each side of the razor a few times across the hone, from the heel to the point, in order to unite all the parts of
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the edge, and produce a perfect regularity. When this is done, the whole business is, in general, performed, and the wondrous difficulty vanishes.

In the whole of this operation, the most important circumstances to be attended to are to begin at the heel of the razor, and proceed regularly to the point; to keep it quite flat, not raising the back in any degree; to press with as much force (and, with a good hone, very little is necessary) on one part of the edge as on the other; to observe that the wire is produced throughout its whole extent*; and to remove all irregularities, and cause a perfect equality of keenness, from one end to the other, by drawing it along, in the finishing strokes, in the manner I have recommended. It may be added that, for the sake of neatness of workmanship, it is proper to hone the razor as much on one side as on the other.

When the edge of a razor that requires setting is in the usual state, that is, when it is free from notches, and is merely become thick in consequence of the injudicious use of the razor-strop, it will be found that very little honing is necessary to bring it to a proper condition. In this state razors generally are, when they re-

* The wire will frequently, when the razor requires much honing, separate from the edge and remain upon the hone. This must, of course, be allowed for.

quire setting; and, indeed, they are never otherwise, unless they are treated with shameful carelessness. When the edge has notches in it, though so small as to be scarcely perceptible, the operation requires, of course, more time and more attention. Still, however, a good hone is fully sufficient for the purpose. But when these notches are large, and the razor is not intended for a very strong beard, it is better that the cutler should have recourse to grinding. A person may, indeed, bring his razor, when thus ill-treated, to a proper state by setting only; and to this there can be no objection, but what arises from the length of time it requires, and the injury which the back of the razor receives in it's appearance from so much pressure upon the hone.

The common method of setting razors is, in several respects, defective. In the first place, it is usual to begin honing at the point, instead of the heel, of the razor. When this is not the case, the operator generally begins at that part of the edge (it's middle, for instance) which is most dull, and which, therefore, in his opinion requires most honing. The first method is a wrong one, because it is impossible in this manner to set a razor so regularly as in the way I have recommended. The second is much more wrong, because its sure consequences are the utmost keenness in one part, and a
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total want of it in another. In this manner, however, do the setters of razors, professional or otherwise, generally operate; and hence the opinion which I have expressed in the first section of this treatise, that, so far from being able to answer for the perfection of the instruments which they sell, the greater part of the dealers in this article are not even capable of communicating to a well wrought razor that exquisite degree of keenness which experience and skill have power to bestow.

I have recommended it to my readers to lay their razors flat upon the hone, when they are going to set them; and have asserted that in this manner the operation should, in general, be performed. I know of but two exceptions to this general rule. These exceptions take place, first, when the razor (properly formed) is intended for a beard of unusual strength; and secondly, when (though not intended for a very stiff beard) it's breadth is too great, or it's back too thin, to admit of it's edge receiving, by flat setting, a sufficient degree of firmness for the purpose. In these cases, the back must be raised a little during the whole of the operation, in order that the strength of the edge may be proportioned to the degree of resistance it will meet with. In my own opinion, such cases are, comparatively, rare. However, when they do occur, great attention and a very steady hand are requisite.

I am

I am aware that the propriety of the general rule I have laid down has been controverted and denied. I am aware, too, that it has been denied by a person whose professional merit entitles him, even in my own opinion, to the most respectful attention. But I have no hesitation in saying that I feel no doubt on this subject; and I imagine that the manufacturer I speak of would, on reconsidering the question, depart from his former opinion. Let the public, however, decide between us.

Mr. SAVIGNY begins with observing* that "the manner of setting a razor, as he "has *constantly* heard prescribed, is to "apply it flat upon the hone, observing "that the back and edge touch at the "same time; and that surely a man without the assistance of a supernatural genius, may easily perceive, that tho' this "may some times be a proper direction, "it cannot however be always so."—Thus far we agree, but this was not the point at issue between us. He adds that "he thinks he may venture to say, it can "very seldom take place, as the circumstance that gives it propriety, is very "rarely found; it depending upon the

* See the first edition of Mr. SAVIGNY's pamphlet, pages 30 and 31. In the last edition, printed in 1786, the whole chapter on setting razors is omitted. I am unable to discover the consistency with which the author can state in this edition that he "has treated on every thing necessary to compleat the "equipage."

“ thickness of the back being exactly pro-
 “ portioned to the breadth of the razor;—
 that “ admitting this manner of setting
 “ razors was proper, with respect to those
 “ which had thick backs, it is very evi-
 “ dent that it must be quite the reverse
 “ with those of a thin make;—and that
 “ hence it appears, how injudicious it is,
 “ to lay it down as a *general* rule; for the
 “ very circumstance that renders it eligible
 “ in the one case, entirely oversets it in
 “ the other.”—Surely, in the latter part
 of this quotation, Mr. SAVIGNY should
 have substituted the word *universal* for
general; as, indeed, the tenor of his own
 argument requires. The truth seems to
 be that Mr. SAVIGNY had neglected to me-
 thodise his ideas (a very common fault with
 writers, and, especially, with young wri-
 ters) before he began to write; for, other-
 wise, he would not have fallen into this
 evident confusion, or have observed so
 unnecessarily (as he afterwards does) “ that
 “ a workman will be always nearer the
 “ right, in consulting his own judgment
 “ in this matter, than in trusting *indis-*
 “ *criminately* on the thickness of the ra-
 “ zor he has to set.” Of indiscriminate
 dependence on this particular, certainly
 no workman is capable; and certainly,
 too, though this would be wrong, the rule
 I have laid down may be generally, and
 very generally, right.

With respect to the question itself, whe-
 ther a razor will receive, by flat setting,
 that

that kind of edge which is generally proper, I have to observe that it is the object of all razor-makers so to proportion the thickness of a razor to its breadth, as to make it capable of receiving, by the mode of setting I have recommended, that exact degree of strength in its edge which is found to be, in general, necessary. When the razor is intended to be heavier than usual, its back is so formed as to give the degree of weight required without adding to the breadth of that part which is intended to rest upon the hone. That razor-makers usually fail in these particulars, no one, I imagine, will assert. When they do fail, an exception to the general rule takes place, as I have before stated.

I have endeavoured to prove, in the former part of this section, that ignorant or artful razor-strop-makers have led the public into error in making them believe that their strops are capable of keeping a razor in order without setting. Though I have, perhaps, established, at least in some minds, a conviction of the necessity of recurring, occasionally, to the assistance of the hone, I can inform the public, in return, in what particular they may practise œconomy to an equal or greater amount. This may be done in the grinding of razors. When the edge of a razor is dull, either from the want of a good strop, the never-failing tendency of even the best of them, or the unskilful manner

in which they are generally used, how common is it for the owner to imagine that it needs grinding; and particularly when it has been lately set, (perhaps, by an unskilful hand) and yet will not perform pleasantly! This is a mistaken opinion which cutlers, or, at least, many of them, are too ready to confirm. The consequence is that steel of the best quality is frequently thrown away. When I witness this folly and deception, (and I witness, or hear of, them very often) I confess that I feel concern, and some indignation, too, at the extent of their influence. This influence not only extends to the shameful waste of an excellent instrument in the first instance, but sometimes renders it necessary to grind it again * merely on account of it's having been badly ground when it did not require grinding. My conviction of the frequency of this practice, and of it's mischievous consequences, is so strong that I request particular attention to the assertion that no razor, properly formed, will, in the

* It is by no means unusual with grinders of little judgment to wear away the breadth of the instrument, without diminishing, at the same time, the thickness of it's back. I wish I could say that this practice is confined to the lower class of grinders. But I have known one of the best of our London razor-makers (who, notwithstanding common prejudice, are, in general, greatly inferior to the country manufacturers) frequently guilty of this negligence. When a razor is ground in this manner, so great a want of care or judgment is discovered as to render the practice in no small degree disgraceful.

course

course of fair use, and with a right mode of setting, EVER require grinding. It is an absolute impossibility that it should. For, in the first place, a razor, that is not ill used, will never have any notches in it, unless it was over-heated in the act of tempering it; and, when this is the case, setting and grinding are, as I have before proved, equally inefficacious. Nor will it need grinding in consequence of it's breadth being lessened by the use of the hone and the razor-strop; for, as it's breadth is diminished, the thickness of it's back is diminished likewise, and in the exact proportion that is necessary. This, I state, is the case when a right mode of setting is adopted. But, if the back of the instrument is raised, in any degree, during this operation, the time will, I acknowledge, come when it will require grinding. It will be said, perhaps, that when the back and edge are much worn away, the sides of the razor will become strait, and that it will then be proper to grind it. I grant that it may; but, in this case, the razor is no longer properly formed, and needs only to have the regular slope of it's sides restored to it.

I have said that a razor, that is not ill-used, will never have notches in it, and, therefore, will not require grinding. I add that it will not require grinding, unless, when it has notches in it, those notches are large. When they are, and the razor is not intended for a remarkably
stiff

stiff beard, it will be better to grind it; because, in this case, the business of setting would occupy more time than a person, who is to gain his livelihood by his time, can afford to bestow. But, when the razor is intended for a beard that is, indeed, very stiff, the raising of it's back during the time of setting will soon enable the operator to bring it to a proper condition.

For the information of those who do not know how to set a pen-knife, I beg leave to state (though it is not necessarily connected with my subject) that the manner of setting instruments intended to overcome a great degree of resistance is different from that which must be adopted for those against which the resistance will be trifling. For the former purpose greater strength must be given to the edge; and to do this in a proper manner according to the nature of the instrument, the back must be raised to different degrees of elevation. The rule for setting a pen-knife is to raise the back but a little. However, this rule must vary according as the thickness of the instrument is proportioned to it's breadth.—In all other respects, the mode of setting should be the same as that before recommended. But, when the back of any instrument is raised from the hone, a steady hand is particularly necessary.

S E C T.

SECT. III.

Of the Razor-Strop, and of Stropping a Razor.

THE first observation on this subject, which appears to me worthy of the attention of my readers, relates to the form of a razor-strop. What, then, is the form in which the sides of a razor-strop should be made? I reply, without hesitation, that every razor-strop should be flat; for in this form it is calculated to produce the best effect. It corresponds with the shape of the instrument that is to be applied to it, it possesses all the advantages which the contrary form can possibly possess, and it is free from all its never-failing disadvantages.

It may seem a simple remark, but it is a remark decisive on this simple subject, that, so long as razors are flat, the strops to be used with them should be flat, likewise. In the name of common sense, why should they be otherwise? If it be asserted that the smoothing side of the strop should be round in order to produce a greater degree of elasticity and softness, I answer that I have already demonstrated the stupidity of this assertion by proving, in the last section, that the necessary tendency, the ultimate effect, even of razor-strops that are properly formed

formed, is to round the edge of the instrument too much, and thus to render it less keen than it may be made by the moderate use of the strop after setting. As this is the case, how completely ridiculous is the custom of constructing a razor-strop in such a manner as to make it necessarily productive of greater mischief. And yet these are the wonderful strops which render setting unnecessary. But this is not all. Razor-strops, thus formed, are liable to another objection. When they have been used long, a part of the bran with which the smoothing side is stuffed (for this is the manner of making them) is forced, by the action of the razor, from the middle to the ends; and these strops, so famous for their softness, their elasticity, and many other equally fine qualities, become lumpy, and irregular in their action. From the very construction of them, it is clear that this must be the case; and, besides my own observation of such strops, I have heard it acknowledged by some of the makers of them that, however hard they stuff them, (and, by the way, if they are stuffed hard, their boasted excellence disappears) the case is as I have stated it.

From these, and all other disadvantages, a razor-strop, whose smoothing side is as flat as its sharpening side, appears to me to be free. I add that, when used with moderation, and according to the dictates of good sense, it is calculated to
give

give to a razor that nicely finished edge which neither itself nor the hone alone can produce. Perhaps, to remove from the edge of the instrument that raggedness which is caused by setting, a single leather may not be sufficient; but two leathers, of a proper quality, on the smoothing side will completely produce this effect by permitting the extremity of the edge to receive as great a degree of friction as is necessary for the purpose.

Another mistake in the construction of a razor-strop, arising from the same erroneous ideas as the former, is made by some even of those persons who are aware of the error I have pointed out. In planing the wood of a flat razor-strop, they chuse to leave it so thin as to produce, when the end of it is rested upon any thing, a considerable degree of additional elasticity, and, of course, additional declivity towards the middle of it. If what I have already written is not sufficient to convince my brethren of the trade of this error, I submit to their consideration the following questions. What is the form which such razor-strops assume, in the position I have mentioned, during the time of using them? Is not the slope from both ends exactly similar? And, in this circular form, will not the effect, good or bad, which is caused by the declivity of one end be counteracted by the ascent of the other? This must infallibly be the case when the razor is drawn from one

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end

end of the strop to the other, as is often recommended; and, when drawn across the middle from the heel to the point, the supposed advantage of the elasticity is lost.

To be consistent, then, with themselves, the admirers of this elasticity should draw one side of the razor from one end of the strop to the middle of it, and the other side from the other end to the middle, likewise; and stop there exactly. If they exceed this point, the whole fabric of their hypothesis is in danger of being overturned by their own hands; and, without this misfortune, it will have difficulties enough to overcome: for, if the ideas on the tendency of all razor-strops, which have been advanced in this treatise, are well founded, it will exceed the abilities of Messrs. Packwood, Bland, and other artists as ingenious, but no longer as much known, to reconcile with the dictates of common sense their favourite doctrine of elasticity.

One more error on this fruitful subject I must beg leave to mention. It is common with those who intend to make a flat strop to leave the wood higher in the middle than on the sides; and thus render it impossible for much of the razor to be brought to bear on the strop at one time. If I could not prove this in ten thousand instances, I should almost despair of being credited. But of what species of folly are we not capable?—When I hear any thing advanced

advanced in favour of this practice, it will be time enough to reply to it.

The next circumstances to be attended to in the construction or purchase of a razor-strop are the quality and thickness of its leathers. The best leather for the purpose is universally acknowledged to be calf-skin; and, of course, from the price of the article, the common strops cannot be made of it. In the quality of calf-skins, differently dressed, there is considerable difference. The razor-strop-maker should use those which are most oily.

Care should be taken that no rough part of the skin be used for this purpose. If it be, the effect of the strop on the razor will be irregular, and a good razor may be condemned unjustly.

The leather on the smoothing side of a razor-strop should be double; on the sharpening side, single. The reason for the former has been already given; the propriety of the latter is evident from the consideration that the less the leather or the composition, on the sharpening side, gives way to the razor, the thinner and keener will be the edge produced. The simplicity and plainness of this rule have been violated in the strops of even celebrated cutlers.

On the subject of the composition on a razor-strop, what can I say that will reconcile so many differences, and subvert so much error! Shall I say that the public, dearly as it pays for its knowledge, has

yet to learn the extent of it's own ignorance? Yes, the composition, now so generally used, and so generally considered as the wonderful discovery of the day, has been known and used for the same purpose, I believe I may say, for ages. But what will not puffing effect! It can redeem from oblivion the inventions of days that are past, and give to the simplest of preparations the semblance of mystery and darkness. It will procure for unblushing confidence the character of genius and knowledge, and bestow the rewards of the latter on the more prudent possessor of the former.

To the observer of human nature it must be a reflection not entirely uninteresting that of the numerous claimants on public patronage, of similar merit but dissimilar pretensions, each has been celebrated in his day, 'till succeeded by one more novel in his application, though not more meritorious than his predecessor. Thus has it been with the humble subject of razor-strops. In long succession, and of nearly equal excellence, they have been admired, condemned, and forgotten. Should such an observer be at a loss to account for the varying propensities of the public, I believe I can furnish him with a solution of his difficulty. On this common subject, on which nothing more than common-sense is requisite, the public have not yet learned to exercise this quality. They have been led astray by confident

fidant assertion, and the torch of reason has seldom been held up to them. Ignorant, from the want of reflection, of what it is by no means difficult to comprehend, the proper mode of stropping a razor, they have seized with avidity the scanty and contradictory instructions that have been offered them, and fancied that the gleams of twilight were the glare of meridian light. If there is any merit in this pamphlet, it's merit consists in being calculated to undermine some of the erroneous opinions which prevail on the subject of it, by examining minutely the foundations of such opinions, and establishing the instructions contained in it on the basis of truth and reason.

With respect to the composition on the cutting side of razor-strops, I am of opinion that we are not wiser than our forefathers, and that the preparation now so publicly brought forward, so generally approved, though by some so decidedly condemned as totally ineffectual, is equalled, but, probably, not exceeded, by many others. At least, I think I could prepare some compositions which, on an examination of their powers, would be found to produce as great and as good an effect as that which is, at present, almost exclusively celebrated.

Mr. SAVIGNY observes * that "if the composition with which a strop is

See page 34 of the last edition of his pamphlet.

charged,

“charged, be of too sharp a quality, its
“nature approaches too near that of a
“hone, which, though it never fails to
“give a quick keen edge, seldom pro-
“duces that smoothness and solidity which
“are essential, not only to its cutting
“pleasantly, but also to its duration.” I
doubt the truth of the former part of this
remark; because I know of no compo-
sition which, on leather, will produce
such a degree of roughness on the edge
of a razor as cannot be easily removed
by the smoothing side of the razor-strop.
Separate particles, though of the firmest
quality, can never possess, in any very
great degree, the power of cutting; and
I question the possibility of wearing away
the edge of a razor too quickly and too
roughly by any composition that is spread
on leather. Let it also be remembered
that, if the roughness which is caused by
the sharpening side of the strop can be re-
moved by the other, the composition of
most powerful quality is, for a decisive
reason, entitled to a preference. The
power of the composition arises from its
hardness; and the firmer it is the less will
the edge of the razor sink into it and be
encompassed by it. Of course, such an
edge will be the flattest and keenest.

A succeeding remark of Mr. SAVIGNY
is more just. He observes that “it will
“require some caution to avoid the other
“extreme; for if the ingredients be too
“obtuse, and ineffectual, they will be
“equally

“equally improper; for, instead of quick-
“ening the edge, they will deprive it of
“any degree of sharpness it might have
“had before; it being a maxim in this
“particular, commonly true, that what
“does no good to a razor, seldom fails to
“do it harm.”

I quote this observation, not in order to dispute it's truth, but to express my wish that writers would condescend, when they are able, to communicate to their readers some reason for what they assert, and not exact of them an implicit and unthinking confidence. Whether or not it is “a maxim, commonly true, that what
“does no good to a razor, seldom fails to
“do it harm,” it is true that presenting to the reader a barren maxim is not giving him any information with respect to the cause of the effect before stated, and that to point out this cause and explain this effect require but little penetration, and are attended with but little difficulty.

The reason why a composition, that is
“too obtuse and ineffectual, instead of
“quickenning the edge of a razor, will de-
“prive it of any degree of sharpness it
“might have before,” is perfectly consistent with, and, indeed, arises from, the doctrine I have already laid down relative to the tendency of all razor-strops. A composition of bad quality, though incapable of adding to the sharpness of a razor, will, nevertheless, encompass it's edge,
and,

and, unchecked by any counteracting power, more quickly diminish it's keenness. Not that such a composition will *wear away the edge* of a razor more quickly than a composition of a contrary quality; for, in fact, it will not produce this effect *so* quickly: but a good composition, while it operates on the extremity of the edge, also wears away the sides and base of that edge, and, by so doing, prevents the proportion between them from being so soon and so entirely destroyed. This counteracting power a bad composition does not possess, at least, in any considerable degree; but, surrounding the thin extremity of the edge, it is capable of soon diminishing the keenness of what offers so little resistance.

To the remark of Mr. SAVIGNY may be added an observation of more consequence. Compositions, such as we have treated of, are seldom to be met with; and, for my own part, I am convinced that there is no very great difference between any of the compositions in general use. The principal difference in their effects arises from the different application of them; and the same composition will admit of many degrees, of difference. This is most strikingly the case in the circumstance to which I allude. The effect, which arises from the worst of compositions, may be caused, likewise, by the best. If, instead of spreading the composition on a razor-strop as thinly as possible,
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it is spread thick, the edge of the razor, instead of being sharpened, will be deprived of it's former keenness; and if a proper quantity of the superfluous composition is removed, the remainder will produce wonders to those who are accustomed to behold effects without tracing them to their causes. All this, however, may be easily accounted for on the principle I have endeavoured to establish, and is, indeed, an illustration of that principle. Yet simple as is this doctrine, and sure as are it's consequences, an inattention to it's truth very generally prevails; and, though the fault consists entirely in the mode of applying it, the best composition that can be used is often considered and blamed by the public as ineffectual.

I conclude this part of my subject, the composition on the sharpening side of a razor-strop, by observing that, when it becomes dry and is rubbed off much by the razor, a few drops of oil should be spread upon it; and that, when, by frequent use, it has become too soft, and too much impregnated with particles of steel, to produce it's former effect, the whole of it should be carefully scraped off, and an equal quantity of fresh composition be spread on with a knife in the manner I have before recommended.—For this purpose, when it is dry, it should be held, for a short time, before the fire.

On the smoothing side of the strop, the leather on which (as was before observed)

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should

should be double, the composition that is used should be as fine and smooth as possible. This, however, is denied by some makers of razor-strops, who support their opinion by observing that a composition, which possesses not the power of cutting, cannot remove the rough and wiry edge which is caused by setting. But this observation appears to be erroneous. A rough surface will, by being rubbed against a smooth one, become smooth, likewise; and the greatest degree of smoothness can be produced only in this manner. This is precisely the point in question. The roughest parts of the edge are previously removed by the rough side of the razor-strop; the finishing strokes must take place on a surface as smooth as possible. An appeal to fact itself will demonstrate this necessity. A razor-strop that is made in this manner will produce an edge, beyond comparison, more fine and smooth than any other.

Having thus considered the principles on which a razor-strop should be made, and the nature of the composition which should be spread upon it, I proceed to point out the manner in which every razor-strop should be used.

The first thing to be attended to is to keep the razor perfectly flat upon the strop during the whole time of stropping. The reason for this direction is, not that, "if the back is raised, the hand loses it's
"only guide; in which case, it could not
"fail

“fail of receiving some injury;” but that, if the back is raised, the extremity of the edge will be too much affected by the leather and the composition, and, together with it's roughness, will be deprived of it's keenness.

On the subject of the best manner of stropping a razor, I particularly wish to induce my readers to exercise the powers of reflection and judgment. The question to be resolved is, what direction of the razor upon the strop will enable it to produce the best effect? In other words, will the greater degree of keenness be caused by drawing the razor straitly along the strop from one end to the other, by drawing it obliquely across the strop from the heel to the point, or by pushing it obliquely across the strop from the point to the heel? This is, I believe, a fair and clear statement of the question. Let us examine each of these modes of operation.

The first of them (that of drawing the razor straitly from one end of the strop to the other) is liable to two decisive objections. In the first place, it is impossible, in such a manner, to strop a razor equally. The sure effects of this method are that some parts of the razor pass more frequently along the strop than others, that the degree of keenness in different parts is different, and that, in consequence of this irregularity, the instrument does not possess it's full power of cutting. The error of stropping a razor unequally is the most

most important and most common error which prevails on this subject. I have seldom a razor brought to me which does not bear it's testimony to this truth. Nineteen in twenty of them (and, probably, more) are, in consequence of improper stropping, very keen in one part of the edge, and very blunt in another; and then, forsooth, they are condemned as good for nothing. I lament that the pecuniary interest and reputation of any one (and to some minds the latter is the most dear) should depend so much on folly so glaring and, in many instances, so incorrigible *.

The other objection, to which this method of stropping a razor is liable, is that the teeth of the instrument do not, by this means, receive that direction which is necessary to it's possessing the greatest possible degree of keenness. But the proper direction of the teeth of a razor is a circumstance which I shall have occasion to consider in another place; and the objection

* October 13th. I have this day witnessed a striking proof of this folly. A customer of mine has shewn me a razor which, he complained, would not cut well, and which, he was sure, was not well tempered. On trying it, I found that both ends of the edge (towards the point and heel of the razor) were very keen, and that the middle of it only was dull. And yet from this dulness of the edge, in a part thus situated, he had inferred the badness of the instrument; and not only continued unconvinced that his own want of skill in stropping was the cause, but went away persuaded that both ends of the razor were well tempered, but the middle of it not so.—This person, too, was, in other respects, evidently a man of sense.

which

which I first stated is completely decisive on this subject. Indeed, I know of no razor-maker, that adopts this method, whose opinion it is worth my while, or that of the public, to attend to.

The second method of stropping a razor, which I have mentioned, (that of drawing the razor obliquely across the strop from the heel to the point) is completely free from the first objection to which the before-mentioned method is liable. In fact, it is impossible to give to a razor a more regular edge by stropping it in any manner than by this; and, though, on the whole, I reject this method, I will acknowledge in it's favour that, without considerable care, it is not possible, in any other way, to produce an edge *so* equal and regular. Very few, however, of those persons who are accustomed to strop their razors in this manner avail themselves of the full benefit of it. The point of the razor is, in general, neglected. This arises from the custom of lifting the razor from the strop before the point has crossed the whole of it; and, unless this circumstance is attended to, this part of the edge will possess but little keenness,

The only objection which can be made to this mode of stropping is, that the teeth of the razor do not by this means receive that direction in which, by meeting the object, they will perform to most advantage. But I acknowledge that I regard
this

this objection as of considerable consequence; and that I am induced, by a conviction of it's importance, to give a decided preference to the last of those three different modes of operation which I have stated.

The manner, then, of stropping a razor which I recommend, and which I hope to prove is dictated by a due regard to the nature of the operation to be performed, is to direct it obliquely across the strop from the point to the heel. By stropping it in this manner, it's teeth will be formed in such a direction as to meet the object which is to be removed by them; and, by operating in this direction, their power of cutting is increased. Indeed, the man who expects any instrument to perform so well when it's teeth attack the object sideways as when they are drawn or pushed obliquely against it, must be very ignorant of, or very inattentive to, the principle on which the commonest of all cutting instruments is constructed. Examine the construction of a common saw. Consider in what direction it's teeth are formed, and the principle on which such a direction is given to them. The direction of it's teeth is from the handle to the point; and the reason for this is their being intended to cut, principally, when they are pushed forwards. The teeth of an other sort of saw have, it is true, an opposite direction; but this is because it is intended to cut by being drawn backwards.

wards. In all cases, the principle is the same;—that of obliquely directing the teeth of the instrument towards the object which they are to cut.

In this manner should the edge of a razor be formed, because, when this principle is attended to, it will operate to most advantage. Who, indeed, that has ever handled a saw, or properly considered it's construction, can doubt this? An experiment on so large a scale must produce a conviction in the mind of every one that the teeth of an instrument possess, in a greater degree, the power of cutting when their points meet the object, than when they are brought to the attack in a different line of direction.

If, then, it is granted that the teeth of a razor should be formed on this principle, and that stropping it in the manner I have recommended will direct it's teeth downwards, the propriety of this manner of stropping must arise from the consideration that the teeth of an edge which is thus formed can most easily and most advantageously be brought to bear upon the object. For the proof of this, I refer my readers to the fifth section.

But say the public in general, and some of those persons who ought to know more of this matter than the public in general, we cannot conceive that the edge of a razor can consist of the minute points which you call teeth, or that, by stropping it in any particular manner, you can give to these

these teeth any particular direction. To the first objection my reply is, that the edge of *every* cutting instrument is full of teeth, great or small, regular or irregular; that, when these teeth are destroyed, the keenness of the edge is destroyed likewise; that a good glass will demonstrate the former, and an easy experiment ascertain the latter. Let the reader draw the edge of his razor across the back of his pen-knife, and he will find that the pressure of it's own weight only has deprived it of it's keenness. Is it possible that so slight a pressure would produce such an effect, if the case was not as I have stated it?

With respect to the second objection, namely, that, by stopping a razor in any particular manner, we cannot give to it's teeth any particular direction, or "that wearing away some particles of steel cannot influence the shape of those which remain behind,"* all that I can say is, that I beg such objectors to consider the case a little more attentively, and then, perhaps, they will be able to conceive that removing some particles of the edge of a razor in a particular direction will not only influence but determine the shape of the adjoining particles. That a razor-stop will remove the particles of the edge of a razor in any particular direction must, surely, be admitted by

* See the first edition of Mr. SAVIGNY's pamphlet, p. 16.
those

those who acknowledge that it possesses the power of removing them at all.

Perhaps, indeed, I may make this matter a little more clear by observing that, from the nature of the composition on a razor-strop, it cannot remove the whole line of particles which form the edge of a razor; and that, composed, as it is, of materials of different powers, the hardest of which are separated one from the other, it must wear away the particles of the razor's edge at distances similar to those of its own operating particles. That it will remove them in similar lines of direction, is the necessary result of its power of removing them. The hone, on account of the closeness of its substance, will not, in any manner of using it, produce the former of these effects; nor, as the strop must finish the operation, is it desirable that it should.

I imagine that an inattention to this circumstance was the cause of the error which I have pointed out; though, as Mr. SAVIGNY afterwards admits that the edge of a razor does consist of teeth, it is remarkable that he was not aware of the necessary inference respecting the possible direction of them. Teeth, we all know, must be separated by intermediate spaces; and the power which caused these separations in one direction might, by a different application, have produced them in another.

I have acknowledged that, without considerable care, so regular an edge cannot

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be

be produced by directing the razor obliquely across the strop from the point to the heel, as by drawing it in the contrary direction. This, however, is the case only when the strop or the razor is improperly formed; though it is too true that either one or the other is generally made without any just regard to the mode of it's operation. If, for instance, the razor-strop is not made flat, it is impossible for a well-formed razor, in this manner of stropping, to bear properly upon it. Either the point will cut the leather, or it will be entirely missed, and, of course, blunt. If, on the other hand, the edge of the razor is unnecessarily rounded towards the point, as is generally the case, it will not lie flat upon a razor-strop of any construction. Either, by elevating the handle of the razor, the point will cut the leather, or (as is more frequently the case) it will be missed in the operation. The truth of these observations will be acknowledged by every one who thinks it worth his while attentively to make these little experiments. But, when both the strop and the razor are formed properly, when the first is made flat, and the latter strait, as I have before directed, it is as easy to produce a regular edge in the manner I have recommended as in any other.

/ S E C T.



Of washing the Face before Shaving, of Shaving Soap, of applying the Lather, and of dipping the Razor into Hot Water.

WHEN the reader has properly prepared his razor, the next thing which I advise him to do, as conducive to ease in shaving, is to wash his face, or that part of it over which the razor is to pass, with warm water. The good effect of this procedure is to remove the dust and dirt which cling to the beard, and which would diminish considerably the keenness of the instrument. Warm water is preferable to cold, not only because it is better calculated to produce this effect, but because, by rendering the beard more soft, and the skin more smooth and yielding, it will lessen the pain and difficulty of the operation. For the hint which I now offer I am myself indebted (though with some variations) to Mr. SAVIGNY.

When the operator has proceeded thus far, he must prepare his lather; and this naturally leads to the consideration of the soap which he should use for this purpose. The principal difference of soaps is in their strength; and that which will raise the thickest and strongest lather is the best.

With respect to shaving-powder, my predecessor whom I have so often quoted,

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sometimes with approbation, and, at others, for the purpose of, I hope, just censure, is of opinion "that the lather raised from soap exceeds that of the powder." That this has been "generally found" to be the case, I do not dispute; but I must observe that it has arisen from the ignorance or self-interested conduct of the makers of this article. Shaving-powder ought to be nothing but soap ground and finely sifted. But the makers of it are, in general, of opinion that it requires *some pleasant scent*, and that, to produce this effect and balance the expence which the drying and grinding of it cause, about an equal quantity of *orris* will be advantageous. Few of my readers, I suppose, are ignorant that from powdered orris-root no lather whatever can be raised; and there are few likewise, I suppose, who will not perceive that, by supplying the place of soap, it will lessen the effect of a given quantity of shaving powder, and contribute considerably to dull the edge of the instrument.

Shaving powder, or shaving paste, when properly prepared, is more easily and more quickly raised into a lather than a piece of firm soap. To some, perhaps, it will appear no inconsiderable advantage that it will admit of the use of a soft and pleasant brush; whereas hard soap, unless it is particularly moistened, requires a stiff one.

The best manner of applying the lather
is

is a subject of considerable dispute. Some persons are of opinion that a brush is most proper for this purpose; while others maintain that the hand alone is most effectual. This important question seems to me to resolve itself simply into the question of cleanliness; and, in this view of it, the preference will, probably, be given to the former method.

A subject of much greater controversy is whether the lather itself should be raised with a brush, or be produced by the action of the hand only. The minutiae of the latter method are, first, washing the beard with water, then rubbing it with a piece of moistened soap, and afterwards, raising the soap into a lather by the immediate application of the hand itself. This is called *rubbing it in well*; and one would suppose, from the expression, that the admirers of this method imagined that, to produce its full effect, the lather should be rubbed into the skin, and not into the beard only.—When a stiff beard is suffered to become very long, it may, indeed, be better to have recourse to this method; but this is seldom the case with those persons who are most friendly to this expedient.

The question whether a shaving brush should be hard or soft may be decided in the same manner. The extreme only of softness can render a brush incapable of producing the proper effect.

A consideration of much greater consequence

sequence is the *quantity* of lather which should be rubbed upon the beard previously to the beginning of the operation. To this the operator should, indeed, be attentive; for in proportion to the greatness of the quantity will be the ease with which the beard is taken off. The injury which the edge of the razor receives from the operation will, also, be lessened by rendering the hair as soft as possible; and this will afford a sufficient compensation for the difference of time which is required for this purpose.

The majority of razor and razor-strop-makers have recommended the practice of dipping the razor into hot water as wonderfully conducive to ease in shaving. I am happy in finding that the number of it's advocates decreases daily; and that, on this subject at least, the public has discovered the folly of believing in mysteries. The comfortable sensation which a warm razor causes, has, indeed, been gifted with wonderful properties.

SECT.

S E C T. V.

Of the proper Method of using a Razor.

THE proper method of using a razor can be acquired only by practice. But a little previous consideration on a few particulars will facilitate the acquisition of it.

Before the razor is applied to the face, that part of the skin, the hair of which is to be shaved first, should be stretched tightly by the fingers of the left hand. This fixes the hair, and prevents it from so easily escaping the edge of the instrument. When this is done, the razor should be applied upon the skin in a flat position, and with a considerable degree of pressure. The direction which it will then assume will be such as to enable it to attack the hair at the root, and most quickly to produce the desired effect. Indeed, it is impossible to remove the beard completely without adopting either this method or a very bad one which I shall soon mention. For, if the razor is not pressed considerably upon the skin, the hair will bend down before it's edge, and the operation may be repeated with little effect upon the beard, till the skin is completely fretted.

Another method of applying a razor, and of which the most distinguished advocate

vocate is, Mr. SAVIGNY *, is to raise the back of the razor, in a small degree, from the skin, and, *in this manner*, enable it to attack the hair at the root. That it will do so in this direction, is admitted; but a little consideration will enable any one to perceive that the stroke of the razor (and this is of some consequence) will be much shorter, that the difficulty of the operation and the injury which the edge of the instrument receives will be much greater, and the skin much more fretted, by this method of shaving than by that which I have before recommended. That the method alluded to cannot, on account of the nature of the surface, be adopted in all parts of the operation, is true; but it is true, also, that, where it can be adopted, experience has fully assigned to it the advantages I have enumerated. The reader will recollect that, when the hair is removed from the lower part of his cheek, the sensation is less unpleasant than when it is removed from the upper lip, for example; and a little reflection on it's cause will convince him of the propriety of adopting the method I recommend, (and which is practised by most of those persons who gain their livelihood by shaving) wherever it can be adopted. In one case, the razor acts on the principle which I have endeavoured to establish; in the

* See the chapter on applying a razor in either the first or last edition of his pamphlet.

other,

other, on that which appears to me to be a bad one.

I proceed to point out another defect in the management of a razor which is very general, and which very much diminishes the power of the instrument. This is the custom of directing the edge in a strait line towards that part of the beard on which it is intended to operate, instead of drawing it obliquely down during the time of it's being pushed forwards. The consequence of this method is, that one part only of the edge is brought to bear upon the object; whereas the principle on which the instrument is formed is that of cutting, not by the direct application of weight or force, but by the quick succession of it's teeth in the same direction and over the same part of the substance. But this matter has been so fully illustrated in the first * section of this treatise, that I conceive it sufficient to direct those, who are not aware of the importance of the error which I have pointed out, to the reconsideration of what I have there advanced. In connection, however, with this subject, I must detain the reader a little longer to remark to him the superiority which, in this view of the matter, the method of stropping I have recommended has over every other method. If, indeed, it was right to expect a razor to cut by the direct application of

* See pages 3 and 4.

it's edge to the object, and not by the quick succession of it's points on the same substance, the method of drawing the razor straightly from one end of the strop to the other (a rule laid down by those who have but little knowledge of the art, and practised with submissive thoughtlessness by a considerable part of the public) would be, theoretically and practically, the best. If, too, it was, in general, practicable to direct the razor upwards during the operation of shaving, the general practice of drawing it across the strop from the heel to the point would, consequently, be well-founded. Indeed, I think that those, who are the firm defenders of this mode of stropping a razor, should avow themselves the determined champions of the corresponding method of using it.—But, if, from a consideration of the nature of the instrument and the principle of it's operation, my readers are convinced that it's power of cutting is increased by the quick succession of it's teeth on the same substance, and by their meeting it instead of attacking it sideways, they will perceive, likewise, that, when they are formed downwards, and when the instrument itself is drawn down obliquely during the time of it's being pushed forward, these points or teeth will, most easily and most advantageously, be brought to bear upon the object; and, of course, that directing the razor obliquely across the strop from the point to the heel, is the proper

proper method of stropping it. These circumstances are as links of the same chain; and those persons, who admit the truth of the premises, must admit, likewise, the justness of the conclusion.

When the operation of shaving is finished, the instrument should be wiped dry, that no rust may be formed upon it's edge. In any other part of it's surface, a little rust will affect only it's appearance; in this, it will considerably lessen it's power of cutting.—The only secure way of wiping the edge of a keen instrument is to direct it *towards* the cloth or leather, and not (as is generally supposed) *from* it.

In washing the face after shaving, cold water, as contributing most to strengthen the skin, is most proper.

THE END.



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with the water and the condensation of the steam, and the heat of the steam is used to heat the water. The heat of the steam is also used to heat the water in the condenser. The heat of the steam is also used to heat the water in the condenser.

No. 85, PICCADILLY,

Opposite the GREEN PARK,

And No. 3, MITRE-COURT,

FLEET-STREET.

These shops are established for the sale of the under-mentioned articles, exclusively. They are all manufactured by Mr. KINGSBURY, or under his own immediate direction; and are intended to be, universally, of the best quality.

RAZORS,
RAZOR-STROPS,
COMPOSITION for
RAZOR-STROPS,
HONES,
SHAVING CAKES,
SHAVING POWDER,
SHAVING PASTE,
SHAVING-BRUSHES,
SHAVING POUCHES, and
SHAVING CASES, (particularly convenient for travelling) furnished or unfurnished,

TOOTH-BRUSHES,
NAIL-BRUSHES,
TOOTH-PICKS of two patterns
TOOTH-POWDER,
POUCHES intended to hold tooth-brushes, with a box of a convenient form for tooth-powder,
CASES for the same purpose,

AND

CASES intended to hold both tooth-brushes and shaving articles.

Orders by letters post-paid, and appointing payment on the delivery of the goods, are properly attended to.

Orders for exportation are executed with a liberal discount.

Shop-keepers in town and country, who sell any of these articles, have a written appointment, signed by the manufacturer.

The razors, excepting patterns, are all sealed up.

TOOTH-BRUSHES.

OF

SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE.

The subject of this advertisement possesses, perhaps, a somewhat greater degree of importance than, at the first view of it, may appear. That the common tooth-brushes, sold for 3d. 4d. or 6d. each, are badly made and highly disagreeable; that the hair, of which they are composed, is in itself of the worst quality, and rendered yet more unpleasant by the whitening with which it is loaded under pretence of cleaning it, and which, partaking of the nature of lime, tends rapidly to destroy it; and that, from this cause, and the unskilful manner in which it is put in, it becomes loose in the mouth almost as frequently as it is used; are circumstances too well known, and too generally regretted, to need more than merely to mention. On this subject, the complaints of the public have been long expressed, long acknowledged to be just, and little attended to. But it has not, perhaps, occurred to every one that the purchase of these brushes, so low in price, but, at the same time, so low in value, has not even the sanction of economy to recommend it; and that the use of them, which, from the looseness and uncleanness of the hair, is in itself so truly disagreeable, is likewise, in the end, highly expensive.

Independently, however, of these circumstances, the writer of this address can, with truth, bring forwards a consideration of much greater consequence. The looseness of the hair in a tooth-brush has, sometimes, produced effects truly serious. Even death itself, in instances well authenticated, has been the fatal consequence.—Such, then, is the importance of the seemingly humble subject of this advertisement. Such, too, is the writer's apology.

From his own experience, and much more from the general approbation which the experience of others has produced, the advertiser can, with confidence, recommend his brushes as calculated, in a high degree, to prevent these unpleasant and unhappy

unhappy consequences. Their superior excellence arises, partly, from the superior quality of the materials which are used in the manufacture of them; for even the hair, the wire, and the wax itself, employed in the structure of these brushes, are much better than those which contribute to compose the common ones. The durability, however, of these brushes is far from arising solely from circumstances such as these. A little more expence and a little more care would easily remove these common causes of complaint. **THE MANNER IN WHICH THE HAIR OF THESE BRUSHES IS DRAWN IN** demands a so much greater portion of time and attention as to be utterly unattainable at the common prices; and is, likewise, in itself so peculiar as to have been, probably, unthought of, and most assuredly unattempted, by other manufacturers.

Does then, it may be asked, the advertiser mean to assert the perfect excellence of the brushes which he manufactures, and will he really engage that not one of those which he sells will, with truth, be liable to that charge so justly and so generally preferred against others? No;—he cannot imitate the unblushing effrontery, so common, of claiming, without meriting, the praise of absolute perfection; or affirm that, of the many thousand brushes he manufactures, each is distinguished by a superior degree of excellence. Unfortunately, the best wire will sometimes break, or cut the hair which it was intended to secure. All, then, that he imagines himself justified in asserting is, that, in addition to their general neatness, the hair of his brushes is drawn in so firmly as to insure it's superior durability; and that, with few exceptions, each of them will last longer than a dozen or two of the common ones,

In confirmation of this assertion, and as, indeed, the utmost which he can say on this subject, he professes himself ready to exchange, with pleasure, such of his brushes as become loose in the course of fair use, and are returned to him for that purpose. From this number he excepts those only which may appear to have been used with a tooth-powder or tincture in any degree vitriolic.

The price of these brushes is 9d. and 1s. each*.—

* Besides the patterns in common use, there are some peculiar to the advertizer. There are, also, some particularly calculated for children, for the inside of the mouth, for hollow teeth, &c. Orders, likewise, for brushes of any pattern will be executed at short notice.

To them may be added **NAIŁ-BRUSHES** of a limited quantity, price 1s. and 1s. 6d. each; and **SHAVING BRUSHES**, price 1s. 6d. 2s. and 2s. 6d. each. The latter will be found particularly useful, and, ultimately, less expensive than the common ones, cemented only with pitch and rosin, and destroyed, in general, by the first application of hot water.

The advertiser has, likewise, prepared a **TOOTH-POWDER**, from such materials, however scarce and expensive, as seem most capable of contributing to the cleanness and durability of the teeth; and begs leave to recommend it to those persons (and to those only) whose teeth have hitherto been neglected.

The public are requested to observe that all the brushes, before referred to, are stamped with the name of the manufacturer; and that each box of tooth-powder has his name written on it's cover, and is sealed with his initials.



COMFORT in SHAVING

For Sixpence a Year, by using

MECHI's Magic Razor Strop Paste,

*In Packets at 6d each with printed Instructions for use,
and for easy Shaving.*

This is the cheapest and most effective Composition ever invented for giving a perfect keen and smooth Edge to Razors, Penknives, and Surgical Instruments. It may be applied to the oldest Razor Strops in an easy manner, and a 6d Cake will last for two or three years. By using it, tens of thousands have been relieved from pain, inconvenience, and loss of time, and it is patronized by the most eminent judges in various parts of the world.

MADE ONLY BY THE INVENTOR,

MECHI,

RAZOR MAKER, CUTLER, AND DRESSING CASE MAKER,

No. 130, Leadenhall Street,

(The little Shop exactly opposite the East India House Entrance)

The best and cheapest Shop in London for superior Razors, Razor Strops, Penknives, Table-knives and Scissors; (every article is warranted or exchanged.) The best Penknives 1s each; Scissors 1s per pair; Razors 3s 6d each; Razor Strops 2s 2s 6d 3s 6d 4s 6d and 5s 6d each. Excellent Table Knives at 9s 6d 11s 6d 12s 6d and upwards per dozen.

All kinds of Soap, Brushes, and Shaving Apparatus.

*Old Razors, Razor Strops, Table Knives, Scissors & Cutlery
well Ground and Repaired daily.*

The best new Penknife Blades to old handles 9d. each.

Notice.—I. I. MECCHI will remove in June next to larger Premises,
No. 4, Leadenhall Street (the fourth house from Cornhill.)